



CHICANO PARK PRESERVATION ACT H.R.486

JOSEPHINE S. TALAMANATEZ
CHICANO PARK MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER
CHICANO PARK STEERING COMMITTEE



H.R. 486 Chicano Park Preservation Act

- CPMCC & CPSC Supports H.R.486 requesting the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Chicano Park and its Monumental Murals located in the Logan Heights neighborhood of San Diego, Ca For purpose of:
- Evaluate National and International significance of Chicano Park
- Determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Chicano Park as an Affiliated Site of the NPS
- Consider alternatives for Preservation, Protection& Preservation of Chicano Park
- Consult with all interested
- Identify costs for development, interpretation, operation & maintenance associated

CHICANO PARK

MUSEUM



Chicano Park Kiosco by Alfredo Larin



Ramon "Chunky" Sanchez a National Heritage Fellow

CHICANO PARK MUSEUM



Chicano Park is a National Landmark 2016
& Listed on the National Register 2013

Tribute to the Undocumented Worker

CHICANO PARK MUSEUM



Chicano Park & Monumental Murals have deep transcendent values and constitute important cultural resources for the nation



- University of Paris professor Dr. Annick Trequer underscored the significance of Chicano Park and the Chicano Park Murals: "Chicano Park paintings are very different in the sense that they have a special place in history."
- Photojournalist and *Spraycan Art* author, "Chicano Park Murals constitute a significant mural site, and are recognized all over the world."

CHICANO PARK MUSEUM



Visiting Harvard Scholars
Educational Tours

CHICANO PARK MUSEUM



Mural honoring Jorge Pedro Gonzales



Quetzalcoatl



Collossus

San Diego Lowrider Council Mural

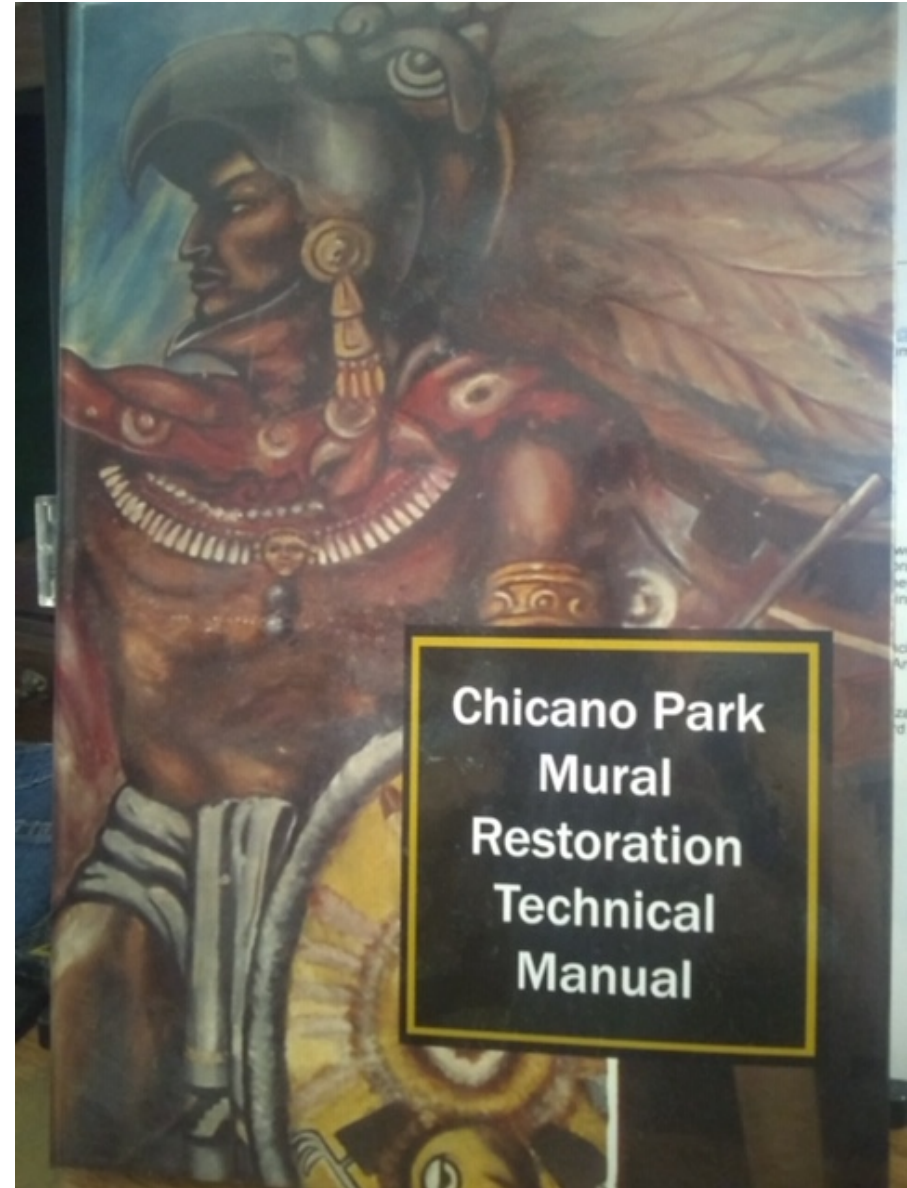
Largest Lowrider Car Show in Nation

CHICANO PARK
MUSEUM



Stewardship of historic structures:

1. Control of treatment and use,
2. Monitoring conditions of deterioration and structural failure,
3. Protecting structures from human and environmental threats,
4. Retaining or delegating responsibility for structures,
5. Developing the skills and knowledge needed to support the program.



Research about historic structures is a prerequisite for CPSC & CPMCC leadership for treatment and/or renovation. It forms the basis for decision making, and it also contributes to interpretation, compliance, and execution.



La Prensa San Diego

Vol. XXXV No. 28

La Prensa Media, Inc., Publications

July 15, 2011



Revitalization not Restoration: A People's Art



Back in 1976, the muralists were busy after first working on it. Left: "Topsy" Galindo still stands proud for "Vario Logan." Photo: David Avila.



The "Vario Logan" mural depicts Vario Logan's depiction of community-based muralism and people's art. Photo: David Avila.



Left to right: Michael Schurer, Joaquin Rivera, David Avila and Carl Schurer during a tour of the neighborhood of the "Undiscovered World" mural. Photo: David Avila.

Part II
By Gail Pérez and David Avila

Chicano Park is a sacred space—literally—where significant rituals and ceremonies are performed and where the murals, like the stained glass windows in medieval churches or the frescoes of Teotihuacan, teach history, myth and spirituality.

Gail Pérez, La Prensa San Diego, July 8, 2011

As defined in the *Chicano Park Mural Restoration Technical Manual* restoration not performed by an original artist requires a conservator whose work "must be strictly limited to returning the mural to its known earlier or original state." But as Yvonne Aranda, one of the original Park muralists makes clear: "You cannot bring the murals back because you cannot go back—our skills are different now." The Manual understands situations where artists themselves are repainting murals and respects "changes ... as long as the community does not object, and as long as the changes are not so great that the community and public see it as a new mural." Aranda states emphatically that artists will "revitalize," rather than "restore."

According to conservator Dr. Duane R. Charney, murals like these "cannot be simply dealt with in modern western conservation practice." He favors "restoration" approaches such as that of "temples and shrines in Japan where ritual repainting or restoration and community involvement are essential factors in the maintenance of works of cultural property and its ongoing relevance." Chicano Park should be understood as a sacred power space of cultural and political forces in contention and a living shrine to a community's ongoing commitment to peace and justice. The murals' revitalization is a ritual repainting and reaffirmation of that commitment.

In most cases artists are restoring their own original murals using technical skills learned in the intervening decades. Working to revitalize the people's art of 30 years ago has reawakened strong feelings and memories. The artists' commitment to the spirit of Chicano Park is expressed in their own words below.

Guillermo Rosette came of age as a member of Los Tebeos in Aztlán, the multidisciplinary artists collective founded in 1970, a time when Chicano and Third World movements developed cultural arms to "awaken people's minds" and do revolutionary, as opposed to commercial, murals. Los Tebeos, who founded the Centro Cultural de la Raza, painted on the first Park mural in 1973. Though profoundly influenced by Mexican murals like David Alfaro Siqueiros, Chicano artists like Rosette participated in a movement unlike any other. Their art encouraged people of the barrios and beyond to take an active part in defending the existence of their neighborhoods as well as exploring their own cultural heritage and identities.

Both these strands are evident in the mural Rosette is repainting: the *Chicano Park Indivisible* completed in 1978 by him, Felipe Adams and Octavio González. On the bottom panel an Aztec runner carries a torch with orange flames, the color of revolution. It is reflected in the top panel's orange sky where two eagles symbolize the spirituality guiding the residents who plant seeds, raise the Chicano flag, and most importantly, unite to establish Chicano Park on April 22, 1970. The runner is on a leg of an actual 1970s journey carrying a fire lit in Cerro de la Estrella, a sacred site near Tezcuapán, Mexico. That "birth of consciousness knowledge" is now buried in the Park.

The indigenous philosophy of Los Tebeos is key to understanding the indivisibility of art, spirituality and right action that both created the murals and their subject matter. "You can't just paint anything stupid," Rosette explains. "It should have guidance, a protective code of health to animate the community."

Felipe Adams was chosen to redo the *Acto: Ancher* mural originally completed by the late Vidal Aguirre in 1980. "I was his mentor and art teacher. This is a way of honoring him," Adams explains, also crediting Aguirre with the design for *The Founding of Teotihuacan* mural on the park kinda's ceiling. Aguirre is the companion to Adams's towering *Cuauhtémoc* mural. All three images are deeply resonant illustrations of Aztec history and reflect the influence of Mexican artist Jesús Helguera.

According to Adams, a Helguera calendar print of Cuauhtémoc was one of a few items salvaged along with "a little car, an army blanket and a deck of cards" after his father's home in Mexico was flooded in 1970. At the younger Adams's request his father gave him the calendar



Left to right: Gail Galindo-Sanchez, Felipe Adams and Frank Galindo with the newly painted 'La Danza del Mundo.' Photo: David Avila.



Guillermo Rosette paints flames on the Aztec runner's torch while Linda M. Velasco revitalizes the neighborhood on 'Chicano Park Indivisible.' Photo: David Avila.



Norma Montoya paints murals on the 'Ninos del Mundo' mural. Photo: Janice Duran.

and Felipe painted Cuauhtémoc in his honor. For Adams, of Yagui descent, Cuauhtémoc has a special significance as the Aztec warrior who resisted Cortés in 1521. "I have been studying Helguera for thirty years," Adams explains, and he unapologetically embraces this style, beloved by lawmakers and all who have such calendars in their homes. Adams discusses his work in terms of his spirituality and activism. "We were revitalizing, giving life to the culture," he explains. As he worked with a game on the *Indivisible* mural, they taught local students the history of the Aztec migration from the north to the Valley of Mexico. As one of the first counselors to set up a bilingual demonstration program in Logan Heights, he is concerned with the power of culture to transform a "cholo" youth to an "Aztec" from "shooting the needle up" to doing "healing and spiritual cleansing."

Victor Ochoa explains that everything about the *Vario Logan* mural reflects his definition of community-based muralism or people's art. It was part of the 1978 Mural Marathon that sought to engage local youth in positive action. The sweeping tail of the mural's monumental peacock depicts a tattoo of one of the participating youth who said it reflected his organic growth. A young man and woman are depicted Aztec-like holding up the world. And now Felipe Galindo and Janette Lane, who painted the original with Ochoa, Alvaro Millán, and the Barrio Revival Team are back to revitalize it along with younger artists: Hector Villegas, David Ortiz, and Stephanie Cervantes. Ochoa emphasizes the need to involve the community in muralism. "The artist expresses himself and gives feedback from the community. That makes you a stronger individual."

Ochoa sees the overall repainting project as an important reminder that the issues of bilingual education, immigration, and barrio violence continue to challenge Latinos. The revived mural renews commitment to facing those issues and the art memorializes the historical links between the activism of the 1970s and the marches and rallies organized in Chicano Park today. "I always felt that art was a weapon for change and an instrument of revolutionary consciousness."

Graffiti too is an issue linked to the need to involve youth. Ochoa has worked with graffiti writers on the Park's *Lowercase* mural. Some graffiti writers see it as a point of honor to "put their pieces over an historic mural." He insists that the current project must continue the dialogue with youth about their connection to the history and struggles depicted on the murals. They must once again see the murals as emblems of indigenous symbols of knowledge and not mere surfaces reflecting individual self-promotion.

Ochoa is clear that Chicano Park is not fading. "A Chicano turns crap into beauty and energy," he says reverently. If that is the case, he sees a bright future.

Norma Montoya recalls when Charles "Gato" Felix enlisted local youth to paint Los Angeles's *Estadita Courts* murals (1973-1979) and recruited her to work with the girls. "The girls," Norma makes clear "worked why the painting was a gay thing, they felt just as able." When she met artist John Chirba, she was in an artistic exchange, but their similarities. Both groups were willing to paint for free and to use art to tackle the "terrible conditions" in both communities. "There was so much talent," she remembers, "and no programs for kids in East L.A."

Not surprising, *Los Niños del Mundo* (1975) symbolizes the "future of the new generation." Giant mushrooms, metaphors for imagination, spring from the ground level while arrows carry their energy up through children holding books and palm trees, finally reaching the feathered serpent of learning, beauty and knowledge. Quetzalcoatl, whose two heads represent the imagination and reason of the right and left brains.

Thrilled to bring Niños back to life, Norma reveals that she thinks of the deceased Felix, who painted the original with her, and hopes "he is satisfied." "I pray for his strength to keep safe on this scaffolding." She recalls that the veteran muralist's children at *Estadita Courts* believed she should thank them for "making me tough." Whether that is true or not, she has the courage and openness to engage Logan Heights' residents with her people's art. "You must show respect to anyone who approaches the mural," she says. "That's a big part of the philosophy."

Michael Schurer uses the watercolor drawings that he transferred onto the *Undiscovered World* mural in 1979 to guide his repainting. He made them after watching

(see Revitalization, page 109)

Mural Restoration 2012

Federal ISTEA Grant to Caltrans

CHICANO PARK
MUSEUM



Turning Wheel Mobile Classroom-Research, Education and Exhibition

CHICANO PARK
MUSEUM

